



2024 Midyear Convention Canyonville, Oregon

RESOLUTION #24 – 18

“PROTECTING THE INDIAN CHILD WELFARE ACT (ICWA) FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS”

PREAMBLE

We, the members of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians of the United States, invoking the divine blessing of the Creator upon our efforts and purposes, in order to preserve for ourselves and our descendants rights secured under Indian Treaties, Executive Orders and benefits to which we are entitled under the laws and constitution of the United States and several states, to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian people, to preserve Indian cultural values, and otherwise promote the welfare of the Indian people, do hereby establish and submit the following resolution:

WHEREAS, the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians (ATNI) are representatives of and advocates for national, regional, and specific tribal concerns; and

WHEREAS, ATNI is a regional organization comprised of American Indians/Alaska Natives and tribes in the states of Washington, Idaho, Oregon, Montana, Nevada, Northern California, and Alaska; and

WHEREAS, the health, safety, welfare, education, economic and employment opportunity, and preservation of cultural and natural resources are primary goals and objectives of ATNI; and

WHEREAS, the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) was enacted into law in 1978 following decades of abuses of American Indian and Alaska Native children and families by public and private child welfare agencies; and

WHEREAS, in enacting ICWA, Congress recognized the critical importance of tribal sovereignty and tribal relations to the well-being of Native children and families; and

WHEREAS, after 45 years of ICWA implementation, it is clear that ICWA is improving the care of Native children in state child welfare systems and the involvement of tribal nations is key to their success; and

WHEREAS, despite the success of ICWA and dozens of mainstream national child advocacy organizations calling ICWA the gold standard in child welfare policy, attempts to dismantle ICWA's protections have continued; and

WHEREAS, while in 2023 the United States Supreme Court delivered a positive decision in the *Haaland v. Brackeen* ICWA case, there is still a need to strengthen ICWA and defend tribal sovereignty; and

WHEREAS, the National Indian Child Welfare Association, working with ATNI, the National Congress of American Indians, and other Native organization partners and tribal nations, has been conducting tribal listening sessions to discern the needs and priorities of tribal nations to improve support for tribal child welfare programs and protect ICWA; and

WHEREAS, these listening sessions in Indian Country affirm that tribal nations want to increase efforts to protect ICWA and increase support for tribal sovereignty and tribal child welfare programs; and

WHEREAS, primary themes from these listening sessions include tribes having a strong desire to provide more child welfare services and supports; tribes wanting more access to information about successful tribal programs and services; additional federal funding that is both reasonable to administer and supportive of culturally based services is necessary; more accountability from state and private agencies that serve Native families, including data to measure ICWA implementation, is critical; federal agency partners need to play a stronger role in monitoring states and helping them improve ICWA compliance; and greater media coverage of how ICWA and tribal intervention has helped Native parents, relatives, youth, and others with lived experience is needed; and

WHEREAS, tribal nations have identified the need for a unified effort to bring tribal nations and ICWA allies together to create a long-term plan to improve policy and funding support for tribal child welfare programs, remove barriers to the exercise of tribal sovereignty in child welfare cases, and protect ICWA for future generations; now

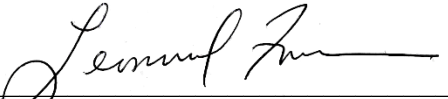
THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that ATNI supports the development of a tribally driven, long-term strategic plan to protect ICWA and strengthen support for tribal child welfare programs and tribal sovereignty in child welfare; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that ATNI shall support and work with the National Indian Child Welfare Association and National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) to finalize a long-term, strategic plan to strengthen ICWA implementation and compliance, ensuring tribal input in the plan from all regions of Indian Country by the 2024 NCAI Annual Convention.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that this resolution shall be the policy of ATNI until it is withdrawn or modified by subsequent resolution.

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted at the 2024 Midyear Convention of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians, held at the Seven Feathers Casino, Canyonville, OR, May 19 – May 23, 2024, with a quorum present.



Leonard Forsman, President



Norma Jean Louie, Secretary